

# Together we are stronger

Continuing the Success of  
Manitoba's FASD Strategy



Manitoba 

# A Range of Supports

Many Manitobans now understand that alcohol use during pregnancy can be dangerous for a fetus. For many women, this knowledge combined with the knowledge that they are pregnant or could become pregnant, is enough for them to stop drinking alcohol during this time. For some women, however, knowledge is only the starting point; they also need personal supports and sometimes professional resources to help.

Understanding why a woman drinks alcohol during her pregnancy presents an important opportunity to provide the support and resources that she needs. Her community, family members, healthcare providers and other services providers can all play a role in making sure she gets the right support and resources to address her individual reasons for drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Below are examples of different situations and the response the Manitoba FASD Strategy offers:

## **If a woman is unaware she is pregnant —**

the strategy supports opportunities for girls and women to discuss their alcohol use with health care providers prior to pregnancy to prevent an alcohol-exposed pregnancy.

## **If a woman is unaware of the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy —**

the provincial government provides evidence-based information so women can make informed decisions; from information provided to girls in schools to various other, more broad-based methods informing women in local communities.

## **If a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy to cope with difficult life circumstances —**

the strategy offers specific programs and services for women with addictions and women who may be experiencing other health and social challenges such as violence, trauma, poverty and mental health issues.

## **If a woman feels pressured to drink alcohol during pregnancy —**

the provincial government funds resources for partners, families, community members and industry in support of alcohol-free pregnancy.

# A Lifetime of Opportunity

For a child born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, we have a lifetime of opportunity to help ensure their success.

Being provided with timely and appropriate strategies, resources and interventions

could make all the difference in

their world. Walk through

this theoretical life

course of a child

born with FASD

and see

“what

if”...

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- **Early Years**
    - Early identification of developmental delays prompts early interventions and supports to be put in place.
    - Child is better prepared for school entry.
  - **Childhood**
    - Family understands their child's needs; has parenting supports.
    - Child is given opportunities for positive social interaction (i.e. making friends).
  - **Youth**
    - Youth learns about their disability and is taught strategies to manage their challenges. This helps support positive self-esteem and helps youth tell others what they need to be successful.
  - **Adult**
    - Ongoing supports exist to help with transitions to adulthood and living successfully in the community.
  - **Parenting**
    - Individual has a healthy pregnancy or is a supportive partner.
    - Receives practical support to parent effectively.

## Avoided or Lessened

- Feelings of frustration, isolation, low self-esteem.
- Over reliance on the social services system.
- Secondary impacts such as addiction, mental health problems or illness, trouble with the law, homelessness and dropping out of school.

# The Manitoba government's FASD Strategy

Manitoba is a recognized leader in diagnosis, intervention and prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The Manitoba government continues to invest in and expand their 2007 FASD Strategy, and remains committed to the strategy's five essential goals:

GOAL 1 Knowledge	GOAL 2 Prevention	GOAL 3 Intervention	GOAL 4 Evidence	GOAL 5 Quality
Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause FASD.	Before, during & after pregnancy, girls & women have information, support & services.	People living with FASD and their families have assessment & diagnostic opportunities, supports & services.	Services are based on strong research, evaluation & community input.	Trained service providers use best practice approaches.

## Successes so far...

### Youth and Adult Supports

Spectrum Connections FASD Services, a program of FASD Life's Journey Inc., provides community based supports to over 100 youth and adults living with FASD. They have assisted nearly 100 more to access other adult supportive services. Service capacity more than doubled in 2013.

### Prevention Services

The Project CHOICES evaluation shows that girls who were part of 4 brief counselling sessions changed their drinking habits significantly, going from 71 drinks a week on average at program start to 25 drinks a week 3 months after finishing the program.

(2013, Year 3 Report)

*"[This program] made me aware about how much I've been drinking. I learned what a standard drink is, how alcohol affects my life and about setting goals around drinking."*

- Program participant, 2014

### Youth Justice

The FASD Youth Justice Program receives over 100 referrals per year and to date has completed 235 FASD assessments for youth in conflict with the law. They also provide ongoing training to help Manitoba Justice staff use current and best practices when working with youth, *"This training has ensured that the issues related to FASD are better understood by all players in the Court system and has altered the way in which individuals with FASD are treated"*.

- Judge Mary Kate Harvie (2014)

### Education

Manitoba has legislation and protocols to ensure that students receive appropriate programming and supports and continue to be engaged in school. The Winnipeg School Division, in particular, has been involved in research that shows us ways students with FASD learn. Today students with FASD can complete their high school education with a sense of accomplishment, hope and optimism.

### Family Support

Building Circles of Support, an 8 session educational series, helps parents, caregivers and involved service providers understand what a child's new diagnosis of FASD will mean for them. Nearly 300 families have joined, using video conferencing technology, from 17 communities across the province.

### Women's Support

*"Coming from losing your kids and thinking that you are not the best person in the world for them and then seeing that now that you are doing so much better in your life, that your kids need you and love you, and being a mother and doing those mother things... that's what really keeps me happy today."*

- InSight program participant

Women who completed the 3 year InSight program reported significant reductions in mental health distress, increased use of birth control, decreased use of substances and an increase in living in a stable home environment.

(2012, Evaluation of FASD Prevention Mentoring Programs, CanFASD)

### Strategy Evaluation

Healthy Child Manitoba has recently begun a province-wide evaluation to see how individuals living with FASD, and participating in provincial programs are doing, and what other programs, services or policies may be needed.

### Training Opportunities

Healthy Child Manitoba has supported training across Manitoba for over 100 parents and caregivers of individuals living with FASD, *"Listening to all the presentations was informative, enjoyable and so much of it was like our family. Nice to know you are not alone... listening to other people in the same situation is so effective"*

- Caregiver, 2013 training, Brandon

### Recreation Camp

Day and overnight camps are offered for children and youth living with FASD to socialize with each other and receive developmentally appropriate programming, *"My daughter is less shy and timid since she started going to camp... She has also made many new friends."*

- Parent of youth attending Momenta FASD Summer Camp, 2013

### Diagnostic Network

The Manitoba FASD Diagnostic Network has brought access to diagnostic services closer to home for children and youth. The presence of diagnostic coordinators across the province has supported a 60% increase in referrals since 2009. When possible, diagnostic clinics are held in communities to meet this need.

### Prevention Data

The rate of alcohol use during pregnancy in Manitoba has been decreasing over recent years; from 16.1% in 2007 to 11.7% in 2013.

(Families First Screen Data)

### Research

The Canada-Israel International Fetal Alcohol Consortium was founded in 2011 as an international research partnership, led by the University of Manitoba and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, with start up funds from the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University. The Consortium has brought more than \$3.5 million in research funding to Manitoba. The research is focussed on improving early identification of individuals living with FASD and understanding the role of nutrition in FASD prevention strategies.

### Public Education

A speaker's bureau of adults living with FASD, called Visions and Voices, provided 31 speaking engagements to nearly 2000 people in 2013, *"it's so inspiring to see adults with FASD and the success story they bring by overcoming their disability."*

- Audience member, 2014